english iV

# Background Material

Instructor

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Classroom: SCHS 132

Texts and Material

Required:

Beers, Kylene and Lee Odell.  *Holt Elements of Literature: Essentials of British and World Literature*. 6th course. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 2005.

Brown, Ann Cole, et. al*. Houghton Mifflin English Grammar and Composition*. 4th Course. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986.

Recommended:

Gibaldi, Joseph and Walter S. Achtert. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. 7th ed. New York: Modern Language Association, 1999.

Evaluation

Your grade will be determined by your performance in the following areas:

1. Book Reports (30% of your grade)
   1. Written book reports
   2. Oral book reports
2. Vocabulary (20% of your grade)
   1. Vocabulary tests
   2. Assignments
3. Other (20% of your grade)
   1. Tests and quizzes
   2. Conferences
   3. “Submission” grades
   4. Homework
   5. Other
4. Written Work (30% of your grade)
   1. Literature reading assignments
   2. In-class writings
   3. Other

# vocabulary

As many of you have already discovered, I think vocabulary is an important part of English class. I have always had this material in my classes at the high school level as I am sure many of your parents or grandparents will tell you. They might also tell you how much they hated it. Oh well, so it goes. Some former students might even tell you they enjoyed vocab. In any event, I have always tried to make vocabulary more useful than just spelling.

In the past, however, vocabulary wasn’t much more than an old-fashioned spelling test. Sure, the assignment was vocabulary in the larger sense. I was trying to teach you about sentence structure, for instance. I was trying to introduce new words to you. The Friday quiz, though, was a good old fashion spelling test. Not that anything is wrong with that.

This year marks a change in direction. I will make the vocabulary element of the class truly vocabulary instead of spelling. How are you going to do that, King of Pinheadia? Simple. Instead of spelling the words on Friday, the test will consist of definitions. You will have to identify, for instance, which word best matches the definition. An alternative is to give a word. Then, you will have a list of definitions. You will pick the definition which best corresponds to the word. Yep, I am talking about a multiple guess test.

“What about cumulative vocabulary?”, you might ask. We are still doing that. In order to keep with the new approach above, I have to modify the cumulative test as well. The cumulative test will still follow each set of three vocabulary assignments. You will be presented, though, with definitions, for instance, for thirty of the sixty words in each set. That means your cumulative exam will be half of the words on the list, but you will be dealing with definitions and words. The tests will be on Scantron, so you will need a pencil.

The assignment portion will be much the same. Further, the assignment will be outlined with the first list. In addition, you will find each set, three word lists, posted on *Facebook* at a page called “I Love Vocab,” if you can imagine that. This allows you to work ahead on many of your assignments, or if you don’t get the list for some reason, you just have to look here. If I were working ahead, I would record the definitions and the part-of-speech although if you ask, I can tell you the type of sentences you will have to write as well. As always, you will have to write sentences that meet certain stipulations.

Just so you understand how vocabulary will work, here is an overview. On Friday, usually but not always, your assignment will be due, and you will take your test. You will also receive the list for the following week. On Thursdays, and this is a new wrinkle, we will go over the definitions that will be on the exam. In the past, I have given you twenty to thirty minutes to work on your vocabulary, this will replace that waste of time. During this time, I will be sure you have the same or similar definitions for the exam. On weeks I know will be short, we will move the test to Thursday. On occasions when we don’t have class on Friday, snow days, for instance, your assignment and test will be on the following Monday. In that case, you will still be responsible for the new list on that Friday; remember, you can find the vocabulary lists on *Facebook*.

Also, you will be expected to submit your assignments in a particular fashion. Your vocabulary will be submitted electronically. First, your work is to be typed and submitted as a hard copy when you take your test. In addition to your hard copy submission, you are to submit a copy to me as an attachment to an email. My address is [mrkucharik@gmail.com](mailto:mrkucharik@gmail.com). Your emailed copy will be filed for my use. Your hardcopy edition will be graded and returned to you.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, submitting work electronically means cheating becomes easier. Cheating will be handled as I have handled it in the past. The first cheater gets the skate. That means I am not going to bother with separating the perpetrator from the originator of the work. The second and following submissions bear the brunt of the blame. If you were the one that actually did the work, you can still get busted for cheating simply because your paper wasn’t the first one submitted. “That’s unfair,” you might scream in your voice of teen outrage. Yes, it is. I am not wasting time trying to figure out the chain of events. Besides, life just isn’t always fair. If it were, I would be filthy rich, and I wouldn’t be worried about such issues. Additionally, if you take sentences from another student and change the words, I won’t accept that sort of cheating either. Finally, if you copy your sentences from Dictionary.com, for instance, I will not accept them if you include material which, obviously, is not your own. In the past I received a sentence which included the name “Ferdinand de Saussure.” The chances of a high school student knowing an early 20th century linguist is slim and none. If I lined up the entire student body, faculty, administration of USD 466 and asked how many knew who “Ferdinand de Saussure” was, maybe, and that is iffy, one or two others would recognize the name. You copied your sentence from another source. I don’t applaud cheating. While I am on the topic, if you copy your sentences from the internet, you have to find sentences that both use the word and fit the sentence pattern stipulated by the assignment. That adds a degree of difficulty. If you bring your work to me, I will be glad to offer suggestions and help you, but I won’t do your work for you.

I think it is easier just to write my own sentences, but you can judge the level to which you will sink. As for me, I prefer to live in a world where my students do their own work and learn from it. I like thinking the best of my students. Foolish, I know.

# book reports

I have decided to make a change in the number of book reports you will be expected to produce. This year you will be expected to read one book a month. Then, during the last week of the month, you will present a written report and have a conference with me. The first week of the month, you and I will have a quick conference to discuss the book you will read. I will check your progress the next two weeks. We have short conferences to discuss the subject of your written report. In theory, I can direct your efforts in writing a report.

The first consideration is the selection of your book. Your book must be either off an approved list of books posted on the board. As an alternative, you can bring a book for my approval. I will not accept a book your probably read before. *Holes, Mockinjay, Divergent*, etc. will not be accepted. However, I have nothing against popular literature; I have something against the “read once, report twice” perspective. Also, I have nothing against non-fiction literature. In fact, I read far more non-fiction than fiction in my own pleasure reading. With that being said, if you choose non-fiction, it must have a story. You can’t read a book of baseball statistics, for example.

Length is not determining factor for the most part. I think your book must be a minimum of 125-pages as a rule of thumb. Some of you may pick a book that runs 1,000 pages or more. In that case, I might give you credit for two months or more of book reports. If you select a 1200-page book that is popular fiction, it might be worth two book reports. Conversely, you might pick a very difficult 200-page book and receive a credit for a couple of months of book reports as well. You might select a play by Shakespeare. That will count for one book even though it isn’t even a book. I am not, though, not handing out extras just because you selected a 500-page book.

Your written report is to be no shorter than 3-pages typed following the MLA format. You are not to provide a plot sketch, a recapitulation of the story. Instead, I demand that you analyze the work on some basis. You have been taught about looking “deeper” into the story than the plot. You can analyze on the basis of character, for example. You can discuss symbols. Any number of possibilities. The final subject of your written report will be selected in a conference with me.

For your oral report, you must bring your book. You will give me your book, and I will select a passage from the text. You will explain the importance of that passage to the work as a whole. I might ask questions about what I read or the book in general. You must answer promptly. If I get the sense you haven’t read the book, I will ask you. If you tell me you didn’t finish, for instance, I will reduce your grade on all the work associated with this assignment by the amount you didn’t read. If you read only half your book, I will multiply your written report grade by .50 for your final grade; your oral report will be 50%.

This need not be a difficult set of assignments. Select your book carefully is the first consideration. The second is to read consistently. Third, start writing your assignment as early as possible. I know, I know, some of you will claim to hate reading. Okay, that doesn’t excuse you from the assignment. You have to pick a book that is interesting. You might want to find a book with a recorded version to which you can listen. You can find any number of ways to adapt.

# conferences

Here is another change in operating procedure. I plan on using conferences extensively this year. You and I will spend lots of time discussing your written. I am trying to change the focus of my efforts. Rather than being the oyer and terminer[[1]](#footnote-1) of your writing. Your work will be evaluated, in part, by *Paper Rater*, so I am free to help you with your writing. When I was responsible for grading your work, I could’t do too much, or I would be grading my own work. Now, I can focus my attention on your writing rather than my grading. I hope that is good for both of us.

Conferences will be both pre- and post-writing. In other words, we will talk about what you plan to write and what you did write. At some conferences, we will be talking about what you are going to write and the approach you are going to take. I will offer my suggestions and try to stir you toward certain goals and away from problems. In other conferences, we, you and I, will edit and revise your paper so that you can get the highest grade possible. However, I am not going to do the writing. I will offer suggestions and show you how to make the corrections. Then, you can decide what you include or don’t include.

Since *Paper Rater* will play an important part in your evaluation, you can use the program to evaluate your paper as you write. In fact, we will probably do that during a conference. The suggestions offered are usually very appropriate. Between those suggestions, my suggestions, and your hard work, who knows, you might become a better writer. We will see.

# Class Rules

1. You should submit work before you are gone if the absence is planned or make arrangements with me. If you miss, it is on you not your parents.
2. Check your attendance and grades on the internet. You are responsible for making sure it is correct and up-to-date.
3. Computer failures are not my fault.
4. Use *Word* for your typed assignments. *Word* is the standard. All work must be submitted in Times New Roman or Arial font in size 10, 11 or 12.
5. Work not meeting the established criteria will not be accepted.
6. Work is not always returned as a classroom set. I return papers when I get sufficient numbers graded to warrant return.
7. You will be doing a great deal of writing in this class. Be prepared for that.
8. I do not applaud the simplest efforts you make. If you wish lavish praise, do work which is deserving of praise.
9. All make-up work is given before or after school. No other time is available for make-up work. You may also submit make-up work during ASP time by arrangement with the ASP instructor and myself.
10. I expect you to take notes.  I will probably check your notes a couple of times during the semester.
11. Do not call my home. Ever.
12. No, you may not bring your papers by my house.
13. I expect that you will read assigned material before class.
14. All typed work will conform to the MLA.
15. Keep the area around your desk neat. I expect that you will police the area around your desk.
16. You will be expected to bring a note from the office if you are not on time to class. “On time” is defined as in your desk with your materials out ready for class.
17. Tests and quizzes will be routinely given. Quizzes may be announced or unannounced.
18. You will be expected to provide submit work both electronically and hard copy.
19. No Ipods, mp3 players, CD, DVD, tape recorders, 8-tracks, record players allowed unless permission has been granted.  Ask if you can listen to music rather than assuming.
20. Cell phones may be confiscated.  However, you may use your cell phone with my permission during times when they are needed for research or during periods in class when you have been given permission.  Calling or texting, though, is not acceptable. If you are told to place your devices on the tray on the board, do so without question.
21. The course calendar may be changed at any time for any reason. Usually, the reasons are rational; however, they may be arbitrary and capricious.
22. If you want to reach me, e-mail is the best. I rarely check my phone messages. Leave one if you wish, realize, though, that I probably won't check it.
23. Use pen for written. I don’t accept work submitted in pencil.  However, you will be taking many vocabulary exams as well as other exams on Scantron sheets, so you will need a pencil on test days.
24. Send your papers as an attachment to an email when you submit your work. Be sure your attachment and email have substantive titles so that I can easily understand what you have submitted.
25. Obviously, I don’t hear as well as I might. I have a mid-range hearing loss, but the lady who gave the test said that I don’t need hearing aids unless I want them. I don’t want them because they are expensive. Now, mid-range hearing loss is the range in which most female voices fall. That means I don’t hear girls voice as well as I might. When I ask you to repeat yourself, speak up a little. You don’t have to speak slower just louder. If I ask to repeat yourself three or four times, vary your voice a little. Sooner or later, we will find a compromise. You could, I suppose, buy me a hearing aid.
26. I am getting to be an old man. I probably had your parents as students, too. Yes, I am cranky at times. Usually, it isn’t anything personal; just bear with it, and it will pass. Also, I am cynical not sarcastic.
27. No, you may not get a drink of water. That is what the passing period is for.
28. No, you may not drink water in class.
29. We are not equals. I get to do things you don’t. “Why?”, you might ask. Simple, I have earned that right.
30. At times, I have to leave class for a variety of reasons. If I do that is not a reason for you to go to the water fountain. Earn your rep on someone beside me. Sit in your chair, talk quietly, and be ready for my return. You are old enough to be treated as a mature person. Live up to that expectation.
31. If you ask, I will usually let you use the rest room unless you abuse that privilege. Take too long, walk around the halls, etc. and you will lose the privilege.
32. I don’t assign work that I am not going to grade.
33. If you don’t want to do the work you have been assigned, don’t do it. However, don’t beg to do work when you discover you aren’t going to pass.
34. I take fire, intruder, tornado drills seriously. I expect you to do the same.
35. While you won’t have an assigned seat, you are expected to sit forward in the class.
36. While I am working with students individually, you are to be working on assignments.

# Statement on Plagiarism

Plagiarism

1. not citing the source for words or ideas which are not your own;

2. incorrect documentation in the body and in the works cited;

3. carelessness or sloppiness in the research which results in faulty documentation;

4. use of purchased or acquired papers;

5. submission of work not prepared during semester in which it was assigned.

Punishment for plagiarism:

1. First offense will result in rewriting a new assignment;

2. A second offense will result in a failing grade on the assignment.

1. I realize you don’t know what this means, but it is cool to use, so I did. You are a member of the internet generation, look it up. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)